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SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE NOTE: ANGOLA'S VICE MINISTERS

(U) Classified by CDA Jeff Hawkins, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Angolan cabinet ministers are seconded by a small group of vice ministers, usually two or three, and these senior officials are frequently our counterparts in Embassy dealings with GRA ministries. In a wide-ranging discussion with DCM, Vice Minister of Interior Jose Bamoquina Zau offered insights into the career path and politics of the men and women that are the future of Angolan governance.

¶2. (C) Vice ministers, Zau said, represent an important pool of senior officials from which the president can choose new ministers, governors, and ambassadors, and Zau maintained that a group of 35-45 year old up-and-comers among the vice ministerial ranks represents the next generation of Angolan leaders. Some vice ministers are technocrats and have come up through their ministries. For example, Zau noted that traditionally most vice ministers at the Ministry of Interior come from police or military backgrounds. However, throughout the government, potential vice ministers must have strong MPLA credentials to win nomination. Indeed, party ties can sometimes create serious distortions in the normal government chain of command; Zau cited the example of a vice minister who concurrently held a slot in the MPLA's Political Bureau, which made him considerably more influential and powerful than his minister.

¶3. (C) In earlier years, there were a handful of vice ministers who had entered government through political reconciliation efforts with UNITA or Cabinda-based groups. Zau said the GRA had been open to coopting particularly effective opposition members. He noted that Vice Minister of External Relations George Chicoti was one such official; Chicoti had been brought into the GRA as a UNITA candidate but had been so effective that he had been convinced to join the MPLA and was made a vice minister under MPLA auspices.

¶4. (C) Key to the futures of each vice minister is a relationship with the president. For many, Zau said, this can be a challenge, as their access to the president passes through their minister, who can potentially see them as rivals. Success in attracting presidential favor is often a result of skillful handling of a particular dossier or event of importance to Dos Santos. Some vice ministers have special access to the president, said Zau. The vice minister of interior that heads Angola's domestic security service - SINFO - for obvious reasons has a direct line to the president. Similarly, a vice minister in the Ministry of Public Works who holds a concurrent position in the president's military office - which handles certain sensitive reconstruction efforts and is headed by the powerful General Kopelipa - has special access as well, according to Zau.

¶5. (C) Comment. Post's working relationships with vice ministers across several ministries confirms Zau's observations that there are many capable up-and-comers, some of whom have a much better grasp of the portfolio than their ministers. However, even in some of the key line ministries, like MIREX, the bench does not go much deeper than the vice ministerial level. This sad fact significantly complicates

the GRA's efforts to properly let and monitor reconstruction contracts, for example, and often hampers Post's ability to engage effectively with the GRA. End Comment.

HAWKINS